

## **Amendments to the Specification**

*Please amend the paragraph on page 2, lines 3-11 as follows:*

In one embodiment of the invention, an apparatus and methods are provided for facilitating inter-packet gaps (IPG) of variable size, based on the length of the preceding packet. In this embodiment, a programmable IPG extender, extension module or circuit is configured to determine the appropriate size of an IPG, or to augment an IPG of a default size. Illustratively, an IPG extender counts the number of bytes in a packet, and each time the byte count is found to exceed a programmable value or amount, the length of the IPG is increased by one element (e.g., one byte). Each time ~~type~~ the IPG is increased, the byte count is decreased by the programmable amount.

*Please amend the paragraph on page 2, lines 12-20 as follows:*

In one embodiment of the invention, the IPG extension apparatus maintains a programmable threshold expressed as a number of bytes. An adder updates a byte count each time it receives a number of processed bytes (e.g., generated, coded, transmitted) for a packet. The updated byte count is compared to the programmable threshold by a comparison module. If the updated count exceeds the threshold, the comparison module issues a signal to an extension counter to increase its count of IPG elements to insert after the packet, and decreases the updated byte count by the threshold. The new or updated count is stored (e.g., in a register) for combination with the next incremental byte measure.